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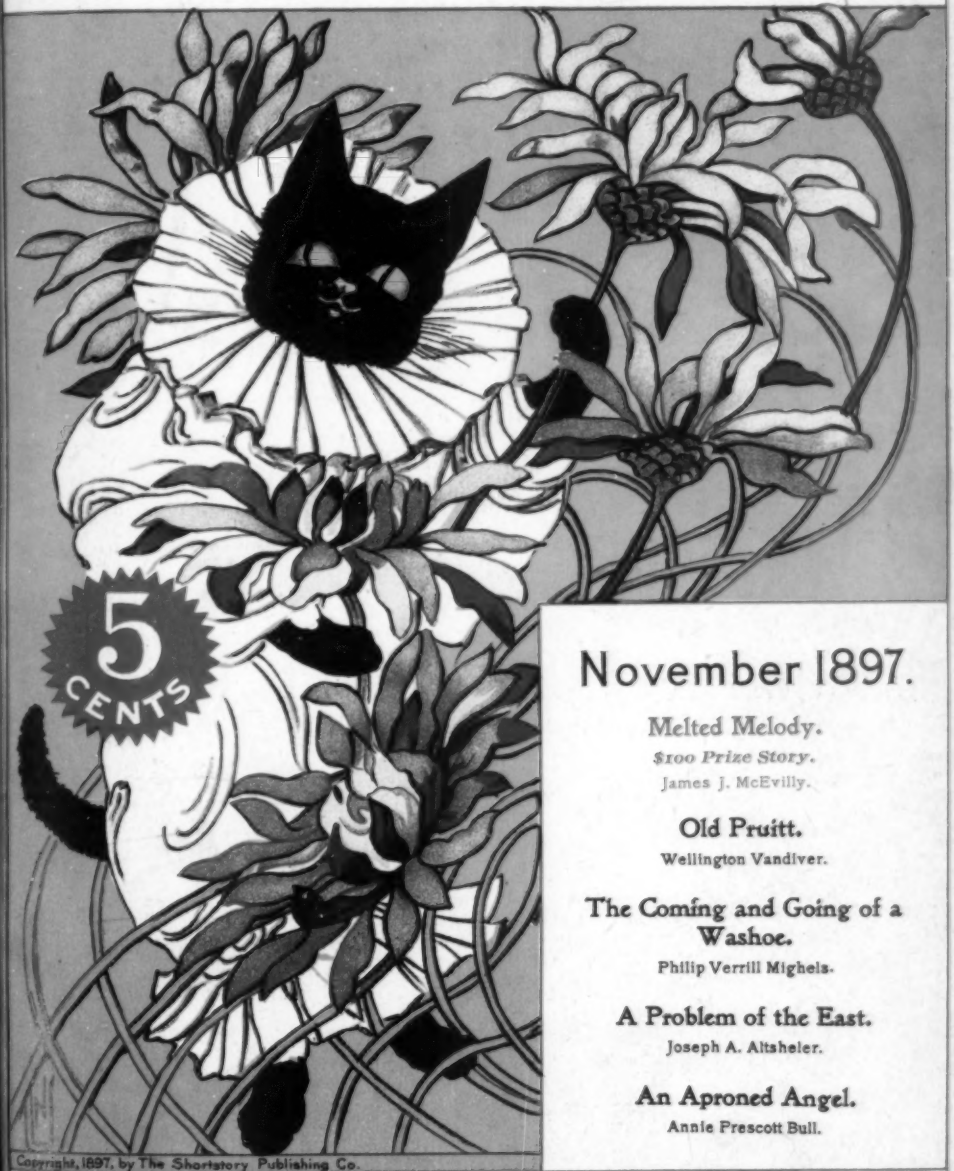
The Black Cat



November 1897.

Melted Melody.
$100 Prize Story.
James J. McEvilly.

Old Pruitt.
Wellington Vandiver.

The Coming and Going of a Washoe.
Philip Verrill Mighels.

A Problem of the East.
Joseph A. Altsheler.

An Aproned Angel.
Annie Prescott Bull.

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MONDAY

S is for Sarah, so slight but so grand.

TUESDAY

A is for Ada, first star in our land.

WEDNESDAY

P for Paderewski, plays pianos for gold

THURSDAY

O for Otero, the dancer so bold,

FRIDAY

L stands for Lillian, America's pride

SATURDAY

I stands for Irving, who walks with a stride

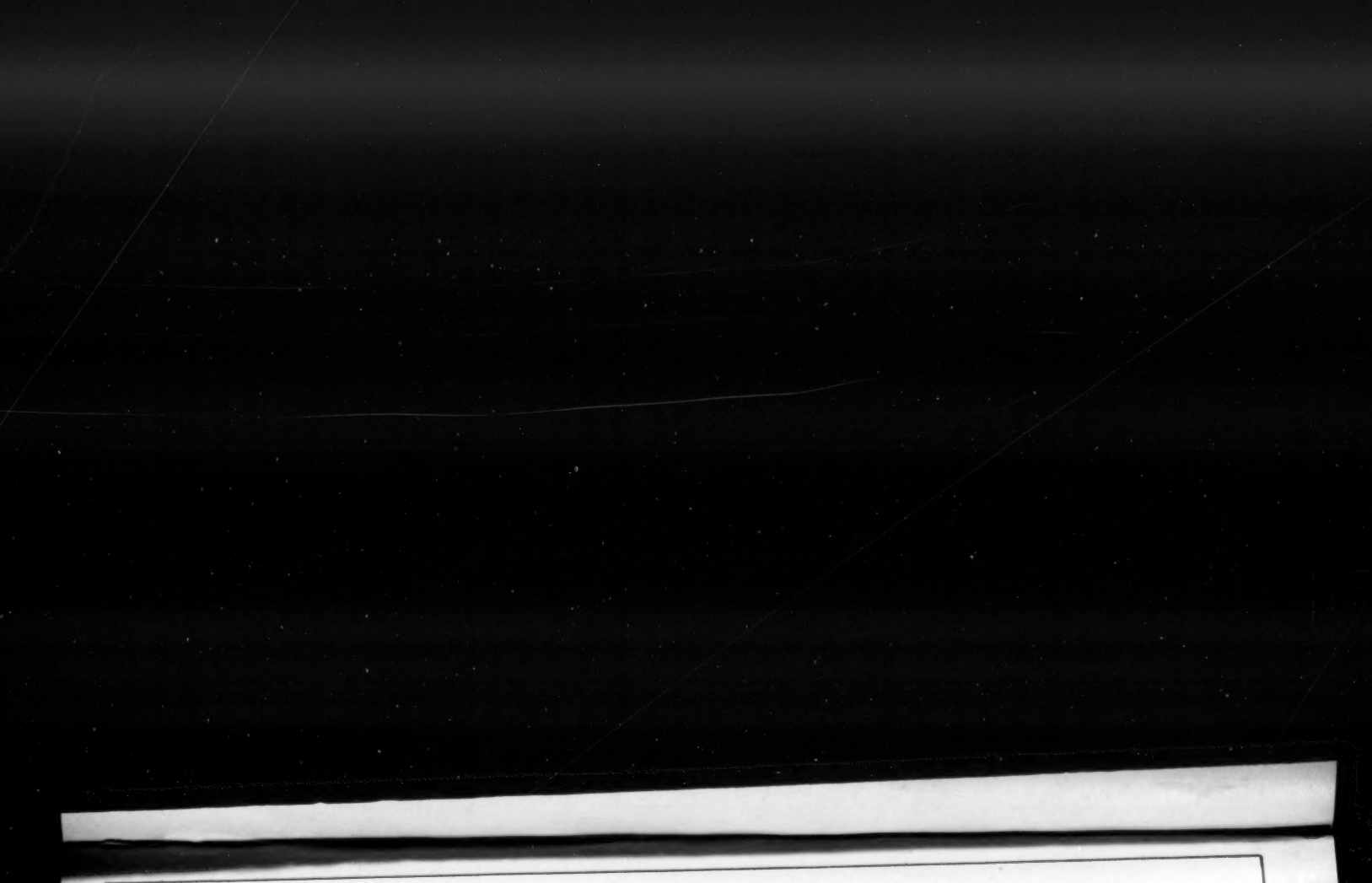
SUNDAY

O stands for Others, who sing as they go

Because they earned rest with SAPOLIO

USED EVERY WEEK-DAY

BRINGS REST ON SUNDAY



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Melted Melody.*

BY JAMES J. McEVILLY.

WHEREVER the famous band leader and composer, M. Zouzan, appears with his orchestra, he is preceded, like royalty, by an advance courier. Consequently, when the world-known orchestra was billed for one night at a certain town in the Great Lake region, the manager arrived early in the morning, arranging that M. Zouzan with his half hundred men should follow in the afternoon.

He had barely completed his preliminary business, and gone up to his room, when a black-faced buttons brought in a card, and mumbled, confidentially, that "the-gen'l'man-was-in-a-mighty-big-hurry."

Before M. Zouzan's manager had read the name on the card, a man stepped briskly into the room, closed the door with a quick, backward movement, and spoke abruptly.

"You are M. Zouzan's manager?"

"I am."

"You play to-night at the Grand Opera House?"

*This story received a fifth prize, of $100, in THE BLACK CAT prize competition, which closed March 31, 1897.

"Yes."

"The concert will close about eleven?"

"Near that."

"I wish to engage the full band for the rest of the night. What will be the amount of the bill?"

M. Zouzan's manager stared. "Beg pardon?" he queried; and when the singular request was repeated, began to shake his head dubiously. He was not a hasty man, however, and he took second thought, and a second look at the other before speaking the point-blank refusal that was on his lips.

The man was tall, firmly built, and perhaps fifty-five or sixty. His flowing hair was white, and his face smooth-shaven, save for a thin, blanched mustache. Though brimming with nervous energy he stooped slightly, and his gray penetrating eyes peered through gold-bowed spectacles in a searching, questioning way. He was well dressed and had the appearance of a man of affairs.

The manager's tone altered. "Your desire, you will permit me to say, is not exactly of the usual sort. Our services, and the price,— well, that would depend on what you wish us to do — where you would wish us to play, and to what audience."

"I want your musicians, under M. Zouzan's leading, to play for about half, or possibly three quarters, of an hour. There will be no audience. The place is not in the city, but some distance outside. I will be at the opera house at the close of the concert. I will have carriages in waiting at the stage entrance. It will be a two hours' ride each way."

Then, as though noting the dubious look again stealing over the face of the manager, he went on hurriedly: "The service desired may be unusual — I dare say you are right — but I am ready to pay you well. The time chosen best serves the essential condition of secrecy, for there must be a promise on the part of yourself, and of M. Zouzan and his men, to reveal nothing whatever of the affair until I make it public. Certain other requirements will be made known to you all before we start. I guarantee your entire satisfaction with my arrangements, and I guarantee the safe return of the entire party by six o'clock to-morrow morning. Now what is your price?"

Again the manager hesitated, repeated his remark about the

unusualness of the proposition, and ended by postponing his decision until the arrival of M. Zouzan at five that afternoon.

To this arrangement the other consented, though with the testiness of one accustomed to dominate, remarking as he went out that the band he did engage would be likely to add an interesting leaf to its laurels as well as money to its pockets.

As the door closed, M. Zouzan's manager tilted his chair, pushed back his coat, slid his thumbs into the armholes of his vest, and whistled a long crescendo whistle, with indrawn breath. He had just turned to the consideration of how big a bill the man would stand, when the door opened and M. Zouzan entered, — to be greeted by a hurried recital of the proposition just submitted to his manager.

"But who was it? — what's the man's name?" the bandmaster asked, as the other finished his story.

"Confound it if I know. Wait! The boy did bring a card, I believe, but the man got in ahead of time, and then so astonished me that I forgot it. Here it is now."

This was the card: —

PROF. JOHN HENRY PIERCE.

AMERICAN MUSEUM.

"Oh, Professor Pierce!" exclaimed M. Zouzan. "Very well. Tell him we'll go, and don't charge him over five hundred, either.

"There, there!" to the other's stammering demur; "he's all right. He may do queer things — he has, often — but whatever he proposes, it's all right."

"Who is he, anyway?"

"Oh, a big scientist — one of the great guns of the Museum. Did some curious things in chemistry, then took up ethnology, and went rummaging about in caves, prying into the secrets of

prehistoric man. Expects to find the skeleton of the Missing Link, for all I know. After ransacking and digging into the deposits in the great caves, Mammoth, Luray, and the others, and crawling through all the little ones, he went down and sweltered in the caves of Yucatan; and, the last I heard, it was feared he was lost off in the Jenolan caverns in Australia."

"Interesting man!" remarked the manager.

"Yes, and when he first took to spectacles his friends in Washington used to tell him, jokingly, that it all came of living underground, and that presently he would have nothing left but rudimentary eyes, like the blind fish in Mammoth Cave. All the same the professor can see a mighty sight more than most men, even now.

"As to his latest scheme," — with a finality of accent that silenced the objection on the manager's lips, — "you may be sure that we shall come out of it O. K., and the result will probably be some surprising addition to the world's stock of knowledge. Now," he added, "I'm going over to the opera house. When Professor Pierce returns tell him that the whole concern shall be at his service at the close of the concert. And be sure you agree to anything that he proposes."

So it was that when the professor walked in on the stroke of five he found the way made smooth before him. The manager followed M. Zouzan's directions in every particular — save one. In writing the bill for advance payment he added fifty per cent. to the amount M. Zouzan had named as outside limit, and chuckled to himself when, without blinking, the professor drew his check for the amount and hurried away.

The hangers-on at the opera house were puzzled. There was an air of mystery about the place that piqued their curiosity. The last number on the programme, and a final encore, had been rendered; the last burst of applause had died away in the rustle and bustle and chatter of the departing audience; the musicians had come out of the hall and crossed the passage into the main dressing-room; an unusual time had elapsed, yet not one had reappeared.

Outside, the drivers of a few "night liners" were gathered in a group at the hack stand on the square discussing the meaning

of the row of great closed six-horse omnibuses drawn up before the stage entrance. The drivers of the omnibuses sat on the boxes as mute as statues.

The stream of humanity which had poured out of the pillared portico of the opera house had flowed away into the night; the blaze of lights had been quenched; the square had sunk into its midnight repose of dimness and silence.

As the musicians entered the main dressing-room at the close of the concert they each in succession noted M. Zouzan and his manager standing by a table at one side, and then each in succession started at sight of a most unusual figure beside them — a man with flowing white hair, wearing a dark robe that fell to his feet, and rolled away from the neck into a hooded cape that lay over the shoulders and ended in a point half down the back.

M. Zouzan almost immediately turned to his men. "I have not often had occasion to test your co-operative spirit," he remarked quietly, "but I do so now with confidence — even when I announce that I have made an engagement for the National Symphony Orchestra to go some distance out of the city and give another performance between now and morning. I need hardly say that I shall make due return for this extra service."

"And you will permit me," said the curiously robed stranger, before the first surprise could pass into possible objection, "to add to M. Zouzan's business statement a few particulars. First, I wish to assure you of your personal comfort and safety. Before leaving here I shall serve you substantial refreshments, and you will be returned to your hotel in season for, at least, a cat-nap before breakfast. I am aware that this night expedition and performance, following the concert just ended, make a large demand upon you, and in appreciation of that fact, with M. Zouzan's sanction, I now hand his manager an additional check for two hundred dollars, to be divided among you on our return." The stranger here handed a check to the manager.

"And now, gentlemen," he resumed, "I have two favors to ask. First, that you will humor the — well, the whim of an old man — an eccentric old man, if you like, — and each wear over his dress-suit a robe, such as I have on myself."

Then, while some of the older men began to look askance, and

most of the younger to show an eager interest and to pass about the hint of a masquerade, he took a step forward, deftly lifted the peaked hood, drew it over his head, and dropped down before his face a curtain-like visor with breathing-hole and disks of colored glass set before the eyes.

"I must ask," went on the disguised figure before them, "that no man lift his visor after leaving this room until our return to the hotel. Also, as this is a secret expedition, I must ask the individual promise of each man to reveal nothing of the affair until I make it public. M. Zouzan and his manager go under the same conditions."

The old man touched a bell. Folding doors at one side slid back, disclosing a table spread with substantials, and waiters in attendance.

As the men came back into the main dressing-room, talking and laughing in high good humor, they found the long table piled with the masquerading robes — and as each received his garment he gave his promise of secrecy.

The manager then led the monk-like procession through the lobby, down the stairs, and out to the waiting omnibuses.

M. Zouzan and his manager were to ride with Professor Pierce in his private carriage, which stood at the rear end of the line. As the professor held open the door, M. Zouzan stepped in, and then drew back with a surprised exclamation. He had found himself face to face with a feminine figure, cloaked and veiled, sitting silent and moveless on the back seat!

Professor Pierce laughed lightly. "A friend," he said simply. "You shall have an introdution later, if you need one."

Then began the long ride: first, the rapid jolting over cobbled city streets; after that, with the scattering of lights, the yielding gravel of country roads. There was no moon, and through the colored glasses they felt only a vague kaleidoscopic obscurity, flashed through at times by the light of lamps burned late in village homes or outlying farms, by lovers loth to part, or, mayhap, by lonely souls holding vigil by the dead.

Now and then came hills up which the horses toiled, only to gallop down the decline, and then settle into a swift even pace across the level. Gradually the levels shortened in, and the hills

rose up higher and steeper; the road roughened, until they seemed to be riding over untracked ground; in the momentary pauses the panting of the horses was half lost in the soughing of the wind through the trees; then the panting pauses alternated with jerky pulls up precipitous steeps, the wheels grinding over ledges and sinking into silences of fallen leaves — until, finally, the forward movement ceased altogether.

Word was now passed from one vehicle to another and the men, their vision obscured and their movements hindered by the clinging robes, descended cautiously to the ground, and stood waiting orders. Somewhere ahead a fitful light flared up, as of a torch carried in the windy darkness. The professor and his party passed along to the head of the line, but nobody noted the unmasculine form of one of the four. Then the right hand of each man was placed upon a guide-line, and he was told to move forward slowly, following the man ahead of him.

Presently the suppressed exhilaration of wonder and amazement yielded to a vague apprehension. The will-o'-the-wisp light ahead only emphasized the blacker darkness into which they had entered. There were no longer stars overhead. There was an uncanny chill in the air. A faint hollow reverberation repeated the footfalls of the procession. They were aware of bat-like wings.

Gradually it stole into the consciousness of one and another that they were descending into a cavern, and the thought went in whispers from man to man.

After a time the way no longer slanted downward, but stretched out in a smooth level, and progress was more rapid. Suddenly the reverberation seemed to come from a receding distance, as if they had reached an open space. Then sounded the command to halt and to lift visors.

M. Zouzan and his half hundred musicians, as their eyes were unveiled to their surroundings, felt as might enchanted men in an enchanted palace. They were grouped in a great rounded alcove, in the side of the vaulted passage along which they had come, and which stretched on beyond to the limit of vision.

Opposite, across the vaulted passage, opened another great alcove, curved and domed like the apse of a cathedral. As a

dozen torches were rapidly set in a semicircle around this space, the musicians gazed in wonder at the dazzling spectacle before them. Slender gleaming stalactites, as of alabaster, descended on all sides, often joining with upspringing stalagmites to form unbroken columns. Back, at the center, where might have stood the high altar, was a marble-white projecting ledge, down over which spread a shimmering flow as of water, though it disappointed the expectation in never falling from the edge. Beneath this singular sloping shelf, and extending out to the center of the alcove floor, a wide, limpid pool of water mirrored the glittering torch-illumined scene. From the domed roof, and out across the passage, and over their heads, depended a myriad minor stalactites, translucent as icicles, each holding at its tip a trembling drop.

The professor stood for a moment motionless before the torch-lit grotto as before a shrine, and, indeed, such it was to him that night; then he turned to M. Zouzan. "Play!" he said.

And either as a result of the leader's sense of the fitness of things, or of the professor's stipulation, the band broke into the stately music of "Old Hundred," while each memory supplied the stately words: —

> "Be Thou, O God, exalted high
> And as Thy glory fills the sky — "

The Tannhäuser overture followed, and then one of M. Zouzan's own famous marches, fit for a nation's advancing feet.

The martial music died in splendid echoings down the endless passage, and a movement in the professor's party drew all eyes. As a butterfly emerges from its chrysalis, a silken-white woman emerged from her wrappings, and stepped out into the rosy light of the torches. Had a nymph risen from the pool, no greater would have been the surprise. The half hundred men leaned forward, looked, and then listened, while a marvelous voice sang Mertini's marvelous "Swan-Song of the Queen."

As the tragic tones of the heart-break had their last-echoed repetition, "La Diva Mariana!" shouted the musicians, and fairly went wild in applause.

The professor had assured M. Zouzan's manager that the band

would have no audience, but for those musicians La Diva Mariana, for it was indeed the world-famous prima-donna, was alone an audience, and in their monk-like garb, in that subterranean torch-lit hall, they rendered in a triumphant way for her Von Hommer's "Multitudinous Seas," with all its amazing range of Atlantic tumult and Pacific calm, its rippling runs up sandy beaches, its ground-swell cadences, and its flashing, thundering, tempestuous finale.

As La Diva Mariana rose like a white whirlwind, kissing her hand to the men in graceful acknowledgment, there befell a startling phenomenon.

Jarred, perhaps, by the tremendous musical vibration, the myriad drops that trembled at the stalactite tips overhead fell in a shower — a shower not of rain, but through some transformation in their transit, a shower of rattling, glittering hail, and the men picked the hailstones up in wonder, and watched them melt in their hands. They were half inclined to attribute this strange thing to the magic of the professor, for the manager had given them a hint as to his personality. But they had not long to meditate upon this wonder, for again La Diva Mariana stood before them. She lifted her hand for silence, and now she was singing "Home, Sweet Home," as only she can sing it. And as always when she sings it, men wept with the homeless Payne.

For such music, silence was the only possible applause. In the hush following, a sharp, cracking report turned every eye to the opposite alcove, as the altar-like projection plunged forward and fell with a gleaming splash into the pool below.*

Instantly, as the ripple-rings touched the edges of the basin, a delicate musical harmony pervaded all the air, sounding on and on in swelling tones, as if augmented by its own echoes until, rumbling down the vaulted passage in mellow melodic thunders, it receded far, far, and died away; then, suddenly, reflected by

* Ice caves, not caves in ice, as in glaciers, but earth and rock caves where ice is mysteriously formed in summer, are found at various points over the earth. One of the most famous, near Selitze, in the Carpathians, supplies the villagers with ice in midsummer. From its roof hang immense icicles, and drops falling to the sandy floor are instantly congealed. A similar cave exists in the peak of Teneriffe, ten thousand feet above the sea. In the Imperial Salt Mines at Ilatski, ice hangs in solid masses in the hottest weather, but melts during the rigors of the Russian winter. The most noted ice cave in the United States is at Decorah, Iowa, a description of which may be found in "White's Geological Report," Vol. I., p. 80.

some opposing wall of rock, the great melody came rolling back in redoubled volume.

"The voice of many waters!" cried La Diva Mariana, in a tone of awe.

Professor Pierce, who had sprung forward, and stood peering into the pool, now turned toward M. Zouzan and his musicians. His white hair was shaken into a halo about his head, his face glowed, and there was a ring of triumph in his voice.

"Gentlemen," he said, "you have my thanks. Your performance has been a great musical success. I believe it will also prove a great scientific achievement. You may now go, all of you."

Slowly the cowled procession, as the torches died down to dimness, followed the guide-line back to the omnibuses. And if, on waking from his "cat-nap before breakfast," one and another pinched himself, and still could not say if he waked or dreamed, it is little wonder.

Whenever Prof. John Henry Pierce appears in public a notable audience is present. At the last session of the International Science Association, the interest and expectancy were increased by his recent resurrection from the Jenolan caverns, and by the rumor that he was to make a new and startling revelation.

As the audience gathered, groups of gray conservatives mingling with young men fired with the enthusiasm of discovery, and with end-of-century visions of the undiscovered, the eyes of all turned to the stage with undisguised curiosity. Attendants were bringing in a tall gas stove with a large rectangular top. This was connected by flexible tubing with a gas-fixture. Then a huge cabinet was wheeled in, and its outer door swung back, revealing, through a thick plate glass, a frosty-white interior.

Pretty little pleasantries began to flit about the room. One was that the professor was about to make a visible exhibition of the hottest heat in juxtaposition with the coldest cold. One, of feminine origin, asserted that they would presently be invited to sample an absolutely scientific omelet. A third declared that they were about to witness an exposition of prehistoric cookery — favorite dishes in the Age of Tails.

The professor's first words arrested this lightness of mind. "I have once and again," he said, "been honored with a commission as Ambassador of Nature, if I may so put it, to bring before this association facts new to science. I am again so commissioned."

He paused, then resumed. "One of the great English scientists,— Faraday, was it not? — when about to witness a novel demonstration, asked to know for what he should watch. Giving you likewise a clue, I will say that you are not to look, but to listen."

Professor Pierce now motioned to his attendants, and, while one lighted the gas stove, he himself unlocked the cabinet and directed the other to remove a large porcelain pan, on which stood, edgewise, a whitish slab, and place it upon the top of the stove.

"The porcelain pan," stated the professor, "holds a slab of ice, white and translucent from air imprisoned in rapid freezing — slowly frozen water, as you know, yielding, instead, transparent ice. But there is more than air imprisoned in this ice! As it melts a marvel will be manifest. Listen!"

Professor Pierce slowly raised his right hand, and, as if in response to the movement, the music of "Old Hundred" took its stately way out of silence into the hearing of the people — the full rich music of an orchestral rendering, yet no orchestra was in the hall. There was, indeed, a faint quality of remoteness in the music, as if it played behind a screen or curtain — yet no one thought of a hidden band — the audience knew Professor Pierce, and that knowledge guaranteed the genuineness of the marvel.

Checking the movement to applaud at the end of the hymn, the professor stood with uplifted hand, a quiet smile on his face, while every one listened in wonder to the Tannhäuser overture, and then to the most famous of the Zouzan marches. At that the applause started, with cries of "Zouzan! Zouzan! Wonderful!" But the professor stepped forward with both hands lifted, warning to silence, while Mertini's "Swan Song" floated through the air.

Then it was that the audience sprang to its feet and cheered. "La Diva Mariana!" Men cried, "Bravo!" And in the first lull a voice called out, "Do it again, professor!"

"There can be no encore at this concert," remarked the professor, with a light laugh. "The music, which was frozen into ice, has escaped in the melting, and I have no power to recapture it. More music, however, is imprisoned in the unmelted section of the ice, and that you shall hear presently."

When the tempestuous finale of Von Hommer's "Multitudinous Seas" had dissolved into the air, Professor Pierce motioning his attendants to return the remaining ice to the cabinet, said: "Before resuming the concert, I will give you briefly the history of my discovery, the mystery of which I have as yet but partially penetrated.

"Some time after my return from the hill caves of Yucatan, and before my departure for Australia, in the course of my ethnologic researches, I opened what proved to be the grave-mound of a medicine-man, or priest, of a now extinct people. Among the relics lay a flat tablet covered with hieroglyphic writing." Then, in a narrative bristling with technicalities, the professor related how the tablet, translated during his absence by the experts in the museum, proved the key to the location of a sacred cavern wherein, before a shrine or altar, the priest performed sacred rites. At this altar, so the tablet read, in midsummer flowing water was miraculously changed to white rock. This white rock (presumably ice) took within itself the chants of the priest, and on being borne to outlying parts delivered the sacred music to other tribes, — and in so doing itself vanished. To the speaker, with his extensive knowledge of caves and cave dwellers, it had proved an easy matter to discover this holy of holies, and to verify the statement concerning the properties of the "white rock." Nor was it any wonder that to a primitive people, discovering the cave by accident, the formation of ice in midsummer had seemed supernatural, its vocal qualities worshipful, and that the spot sought by them as a shelter had soon been converted into a shrine whose vocal ice was made to serve priestly purposes. For the experiments of the scientist had confirmed the record of prehistoric man. Through repeated tests he had discovered that in that immemorial cavern, by some marvelous but still unexplained acoustic and chemical combination, every vibration of sound was conveyed to the waterfall, frozen into the constantly forming slab of ice as

sounds are recorded on the cylinder of a phonograph, and there imprisoned until released by the melting of the ice.

"My final test, whose results you know," the professor said in finishing, "was performed by taking to the cavern M. Zouzan's band and a famous prima-donna. By another year I expect not only to melt melody but to congeal it in your presence, and who knows but that at the banquet following the meeting your ices may melt in your mouth to the melody of enchanting music?"

Even while he spoke the attendants had been making ready the last slab, and now, amid a hush such as might precede a benediction, there gushed from the melting ice, like water from the rock touched by Aaron's rod, the liquid notes of La Diva Mariana's voice in the music of "Home, Sweet Home."

Old Pruitt.

BY WELLINGTON VANDIVER.

THOUSANDS of those who wore the gray will remember that romantic prison by the shore of Lake Erie, called "Johnson's Island."

Of all the wards of that historic Federal penitentiary, the one containing the jolliest prisoners, the most turbulent, and the most untamed by captivity, was everywhere known as "Block 2."

On the whitewashed wall of Block 2 there used to be a rollicking stanza of limping doggerel, written with a blunt pencil of charcoal, running something like this: —

> Noah, Ancient Noah, first planted the vine,
> And after, had reason to rue it.
> Now, if he had monkeyed with whiskey, not wine
> Had kept pegging away till he got it down fine;
> And been actively assisted by an expert in that line
> He would have hit it, for sure, with Old Pruitt.

The prison officials have painted out this death-deserving rhyme, along with many other inscriptions, and it was not until recently that the true meaning of this scrawl was known.

Away down in the endless reaches of the wire-grass regions of Alabama, thirty-nine years ago there was a type of man not unlike the present "cracker," "pike," or mountaineer. Of this tribe "Old Pruitt" was the fitting representative. The butt of the village joker, the proverb of mothers with growing boys, he was as trifling and lazy as mortal man could be made. No one remembered when he came to that locality, but he was as much a landmark as the village pump, though here the similarity ceased, as Pruitt had an aversion to water in any form. As a means of cleanliness this

life-giving fluid was carefully avoided by him, and it was condemned as a beverage. In Pruitt's opinion, water was a special provision of Nature for the sole use and behoof of ducks, cattle, and crops; not to be enumerated in the list of luxuries, as in the latter class could be comprised only those three grand blessings bestowed on fallen man by an all-wise Providence, to wit,—tobacco, corn whiskey, and fried pies.

He was not old in the sense of being aged, but the prefix was always the forerunner of his name, thrown at him as we throw a stone at a dog. To every member of the community, from the dirtiest negro child in the dusty highway to the frigid and punctillious rector, he was nothing more nor less than "Old Pruitt."

It was difficult to ascertain the extent and expression of his features, as a scrubby beard in a feeble and desultory way endeavored to conceal from the world a countenance of which any respectable crop of whiskers might heartily be ashamed, — although a kindly pair of blue eyes gleamed out of this undergrowth of hair like a couple of sapphires from the tangled depths of a torn buggy-cushion. It was equally troublesome to determine anything definite as to his shape because of a wide, baggy pair of cheap cotton pants, and a still wider, flapping shirt whose colors veered between a positive brindle and a definite clay.

But there was one means of identification to be relied upon with certainty, and that was the emphatic, infallible, never-absent odor of corn whiskey, and of a rancid pipe which nauseated the ambient atmosphere for at least six feet around its owner.

Slow, drawling, and quaint in his speech, he was the growth of a tropic country, where kind Nature spoils her children with too many gifts, and by slow gradations he had reached the point where he was too proud to beg, too honest to steal, and too lazy to work.

His cabin was dilapidated, his fences sprawled around, briers and weeds obscured his little clearing, and a general air of shiftlessness and poverty hung about his forlorn-looking home.

One bright morning in the early sixties, the tocsin of war, whatever that may be, sounded through the land, and the stirring tones of the drum and fife awoke the sleepy echoes around the village where Pruitt bartered for his tobacco.

The South was then dominated by a haughty and autocratic aristocracy composed of large planters and lawyers, and their children. The slave-owners were the nobility, the unfortunate individual owning no slaves being a social pariah. In their opinion overseers, horse-traders, merchants, and white renters were unworthy of social recognition; and so closely was the line drawn that it meant disgrace and social degradation to associate with, or even to recognize the existence of people outside of this charmed circle. This spirit pervaded the volunteer military organizations, and selections were as carefully made of the members, and the same vigilance exerted in keeping out the "plebians," as would be displayed by the most exclusive of New York's Four Hundred in issuing invitations for a select society function.

"The Black-Belt Invincibles" was one of these swell volunteer infantry companies, composed of the sons of large slaveholders, clerks, school-teachers, and young lawyers. Rigid had been the examination of the exclusive committee upon the social status of each successive applicant, and the company felicitated itself upon the fact that the "B. B. I.'s" contained the largest amount of blue blood of any Alabama organization.

On the day of the mustering in of the "Invincibles" there was much hilarity and horse-play, some of it indulged in to keep back the tears which the presence of sad-faced fathers and moist-eyed sweethearts induced. Old Pruitt was there, wistfully hanging around, clothed, if possible, more disreputably than usual, with his deadly clay pipe in full blast.

Furtively and secretly he had hunted, fished, and frolicked with many of these splendid aristocrats, sedulously concealing the fact that he had enjoyed the honor of their acquaintance, and it wrung his heart to think that these Paladins of his worship were about to depart for a bourne from which he instinctively felt many of them would never return.

The lugubrious countenance and insulting clothes of Old Pruitt were the occasion of many rough jokes at his expense, and finally, Captain Buck Taylor, confessedly the most irresistible wit in the Black-Belt, lifted his mighty voice and proposed that their old friend be elected an honorary member of the Black-Belt Invincibles by a rising vote.

At the word every plumed knight of that royal band rose to his feet and stood until counted, and when Old Pruitt was formally declared elected, the company gave a mighty cheer, partly in derision, and partly encoring their own brilliant pleasantry, while from every side there arose cries of "Speech! Old Pruitt, a speech! speech!"

The newly elected member mounted a box, and with a lump in his throat said, "Gentel*men*, yer do me proud. I'm might'ly er bleeged ter yew fer 'lectin' me, an' ef yer are a gwine ter fout *shore ernuff*, I recken I kin nuss the gentelmen what gits hurt er killed. I'm a powerful han' ter fix up yarbs and linnyment — er, — er — " And Old Pruitt actually broke out into tears, tears so genuine, so pathetic, so melting, that the whole command would have wept in sympathy had not Captain Buck Taylor kicked a dog to conceal his own emotion, the aforesaid canine immediately raising a howl that drowned every other sound and created a welcome diversion.

. . . . . .

In the long marches in the valley of Virginia, Old Pruitt was the patient, uncomplaining drudge of the company. He was never so busy but that in some mysterious and inscrutable way he could produce whisky for the capacious gullet of his idol, Captain Buck Taylor. He bore the kicks and curses of the whole command with a philosophic serenity; the smallest, the most cowardly member of the "Invincibles" could blaspheme and belabor Old Pruitt with impunity. This privilege was limited, however, to the "Black Belters," — for, one day, when a herculean corporal of a fancy North Carolina regiment, deceived by the apparent pusillanimity of the man, inflicted some small personal indignity on him, their honorary member astonished the Invincibles, as well as the Carolinian, by flattening the corporal's nose all over his face with a tent-stake, and was only restrained from killing him by a word from the captain.

The company saw no real service until the bloody fight at Beaver Dam. Previously, when there was a prospect of an engagement, Old Pruitt had been sent to the rear with the baggage, but on the morning of this day he had asserted himself, and swore, with many a quaint oath, that "he wuz gwine ter stay

long with the 'Vinserbulls,' er bust." And along on the right flank of the well-beloved company he trudged, with a musket tucked under his arm, and his beloved clay pipe belching forth smoke like a small Vesuvius.

The carnage of that day is history. Men fell like ripe sheaves of wheat before the scythe; but, strange to say, Old Pruitt stood his ground, ever by the side of Captain Buck Taylor.

The color-bearer of the company dropped, shot through the head. Pruitt bent over him and gently unclasped the flag-staff from his nerveless fingers, grasped the standard in his right hand, and pressed on, punching the tobacco down in the bowl of his pipe with his left fingers as he ran. He and Captain Buck Taylor mounted the breastworks side by side; Taylor stumbled and fell, while Old Pruitt stood there, towering above a hell of steel and fire. His company was repulsed, and for one brief moment Old Pruitt had the chance of retiring with his command, but he evidently scorned retreat. Instead, he deliberately *sat down* on top of the breastwork, planting the flag in the soft earth, and addressed the gun-squad in front of him, who by this time had surrounded and were holding the struggling Buck Taylor: "What do you fellers mean,—a takin' perrisener a triflin', one-hoss sutler, like yer got ther'? Why doan' you turn him loose an' surroun' a capting? Gentel*men*, I'm Capting Buck Taylor o' the Black Belt Invinserbulls; 'lease that 'ar onery cuss, and kapter me!" And taking his pipe in one hand he waved it theatrically in the air, and with the other smote himself dramatically upon his inflated chest, then strutted a few steps like a turkey cock in the springtime.

It was too funny for the group of smoke-begrimed bluecoats, and they "Haw-hawed!" in a hearty fashion at this ludicrous jest under the nose of grim-visaged war; then one of them rather good-humoredly took Old Pruitt by the arm and said: "Come along, Capting, — we are needin' officers, and sutlers, too, in our business. It'll take both o' ye to make a pair."

Prison life is not considered by most authors and people as at all hilarious or amusing, but I am bound to record that to the puzzled keepers of the Johnson Island "Orphans' Home," the

inmates of Block 2,—among whom were Captain Buck Taylor and Old Pruitt, —seemed actually to enjoy themselves.

In the still hours of the night from the precincts of Block 2 there often floated up to the ears of the startled sentinels the mirthful cachinnations of a chorus of hoarse laughs, interspersed by snatches from the familiar ballads of "We Won't Go Home 'til Morning," and that lyrical Bacchanalian ode of the Civil War, "Skewball," the chorus of which ran: —

"Then we'll all drink stone blind, Johnny, fill up the bowl."

Altogether it seemed to the prison inspectors that this kind of convivial minstrelsy was very unlike the music suited for prisoners of war, and it was also noted by these officials that Captain Buck Taylor, so far from languishing and pining away as a well-regulated inmate of Johnson's Island should feel in duty bound to do, like Jeshurun of old, actually "waxed fat and kicked." There were times, indeed, when the suspicious officials regarded the captain's conduct as closely resembling that of a person under the influence of intoxicating spirits, but the thought was quickly banished as preposterous, for the most rigid rules were enforced as to the introduction of liquor, even as a medicine, into the prison.

Anyway, the one hundred and twenty-five "Johnnies" in Block 2 presented rubicund noses and distended paunches, and were as saucy and comfortable looking a set of unfortunate prisoners as the world ever saw, and this state of affairs continued until the exchange of all the men in that block, an event occurring on the morning of May 1.

Three days after the cleaning out of Block 2 by the exchange, a prisoner in Block 1 handed the officer of the day a badly spelled note, saying it was left by one of the exchanged men.

"Dur Cer, I seet misef ter drap yer a phew linz ter let yew kno that we is awl well and duin wel. Pleaz take good keer of ther *distillery* we liev wid yer in Block 2; youll find her in er cracker box in the S. E. kornder; the worm, we made outn scraps er tin boxes, an while she aint purty, shes er dandy! She'd make proof whiskey outn corn bread crums quicker 'n yer hed

cud swim. She wur got up by a onery critter name o' Pruitt, and him an me wishes yer mitey well. Excooze haist an a bad pen.

Yourn,
Capen Birk Taleer."

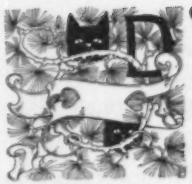
Obviously the spelling and composition were those of Pruitt, who was known in Johnson's Island as Captain Buck, but like all great inventors, Old Pruitt was modest.

As to the distillery, an examination of the aforementioned cracker box discovered a battered coffee pot, of two gallons capacity, to which was soldered a short tin "worm," ingeniously manufactured from the spouts of similar coffee-pots which Old Pruitt had purloined from Block 1. A large canteen, with a hole punched in its side, had evidently received the vapor, and served as the "condenser," a rag from Pruitt's best pants artistically stopping the hole when the amateur distillery was in operation; and though the entire plant was grotesque, rude, and homely, it had evidently served its purpose, which is more than can be said of many more elegant inventions.

In his native home, Old Pruitt is the terror of the lounger about the country store, with his narratives of "how him an' Cap'n Buck Taylor, fit, bled, and died in the wah." Only on the first of each recurring May, when the pair make it a rule to celebrate their glorious comradeship, is there relief from these tales. At such times, whether from the silencing effect of precious memories or the effects of unlimited corn whiskey, Old Pruitt is rendered temporarily speechless.

The Coming and Going of a Washoe.

BY PHILIP VERRILL MIGHELS.



OWN the side of a brush-covered hill, and then winding in and out through the vast and intricate curves of the cañon, like an endless wooden serpent, stretched a V-shaped lumber flume that was built from the region of the pines, in the Sierra Nevada, to the town with its railroad down below. In places the flume was set in "cuts," made in the side of the hills, and at others it spanned wide-yawning chasms as it lay along the top of its stilt-like trestles. But always its grade was downward, and therefore the water, that nearly filled it full, ran with a wonderful velocity and power hurrying the wood and lumber rapidly forward to the "dump" at the end.

All morning the timbers, boards, and planks had floated swiftly down. They were sawed at the mill above, and thrown in the flume by a force of men at the "Summit." In the afternoon it was expected that the wood would commence to come about one o'clock, at a point on the flume where a rough little cabin was built on the side of the hill.

In front of the cabin, which was quite surrounded by the sage-brush that clothed the hillsides and valley, a Chinaboy, perhaps a dozen years old, or a trifle more, was sitting astride of the flume, his back to the up of the stream, deliberately dangling a watch up and down in the water, and listening with evident astonishment to the ever-persistent ticking of the not-to-be-discouraged and faithful mechanism. The watch was of Yankee make; its case a strange, conglomerate composition, green in color, and therefore attractive to the Chinaboy, who thought it resembled the jade of his Chinese bracelet.

"Hey, Chuck," called the voice of the "boss," for whom the boy was learning to cook, "fetch me a dipper o' water." The man who was "lookout" for the flume, having eaten his noon-day meal, was sitting in the shade of his cabin to smoke.

Tossing his watch with utter unconcern in the sand, — where it cheerfully lay on its face and ticked, — Chuck arose, by stepping firmly on the outside edge of the flume, and attempted to swing his foot clear of the structure. Attempted — nay, he did swing it, well and strongly, but while it was poised in the very air, on its way across, it was suddenly grabbed and clutched by a wild and peculiar little creature that had ridden, all alone, down the flume on the top of a log — which log went skimming quickly on its course, leaving its rider tightly gripping to the leg.

With a yell of frantic dismay, Chuck fell over on top of his watch, jerking his leg and its burden suddenly out of the water.

As he hurriedly scrambled to his feet and the lookout came on a run from his chair to the scene of the trouble, he shook himself free of the clutch of an Indian youngster.

There on the ground for a moment lay the round little roll of brownish-red humanity, whose great soft eyes were ready to burst with tears, whose trembling lip was all a-quiver with fear, and whose chubby little hands unconsciously had landed on the watch, which now they held to as an anchor to the solid earth. Then as the yelling Celestial ran shoeless to the cabin, the round little Indian went darting away in the brush with the swiftness of a scared little quail. And his round little head, from which a couple of wisps of his long black hair were dancing afloat, was an excellent enlargement of that of the swift and timid little bird of the mountains.

"Hey, Chuck, come back — head 'um off," roared the rough and clumsy Mr. Hardy, running quickly in pursuit of the youngster, "head 'um off — he's an Injun!"

"Injun debbil, Slam Hardy!" yelled Chuck in reply, and he slammed the door and braced with his slender form against it.

"Here, Injun, here; hole on!" cried the man who was chasing through the sage-brush, "I ain't a goin' fer teh hurt yeh." Then he stopped and looked about, this way and that, forward and back, utterly bewildered. Through the brush he could see in any direction for quite a considerable distance, yet nothing could he now discover of the scared papoose, and not a sound broke the silence. "Wal, bust my buttins if he ain't plumb gone," said Sam, "quickern' a cotton-tail." He looked about as if he expected to see the hole

down which the "Injun" had escaped. "Clean gone," he muttered, "the gol-giddenist mysterry I ever seen."

Reluctantly the lookout faced about to return. On his way to the cabin he was near to stepping on a dry old pile of cast-off clothing. "Howlin' coyotes!" said he, "if yere he ain't!" Sure enough, a tiny brown foot, bare of shoe or stocking, was peeping forth from the pile where the youngster, quail-like, was hiding. Running his hand beneath the rags, the lookout got his "Injun" by the slack of his scanty little dress, and hauling him forth, packed him back to the cabin like a small valise. Then he sat like a giant with a Lilliputian captive on the steps of his castle.

"Chuck," he commanded to the Chinaboy, who was risking one of his almond eyes to look through a very narrow crack in the door, "fetch me three er four hunks o' sugar fer teh feed 'um — hey, Injun?"

"Hang oi!" said Chuck, "not muchee for goot one." But he brought the lumps and threw them gingerly forth.

"Here yeh air, Injun," said the giant, loosening his hold on his captive while he reached for the sugar; "this yere'll make yer eyes bug." But no sooner was the wild little creature free than he tumbled from the step and scampered back to the rags.

"Chuck," called the lookout as he once more returned with the lively little bit of a Washoe, "heave me thet there clo'es line from the head o' my bunk. We've got teh tether 'um here to the house er off he skips." Then, as he gently and deftly secured the rope in the back, about the waist of the big-eyed youngster, he added, "I ain't yit calc'lated how yeh come fer to be a ridin' in the flume, Injun, but the Injuns has allers been white teh me, an' I keeps yeh safe, agin they call fer teh rustle yeh up. Sabbee?"

"Yit, ghee, sahm, see," said Chuck as he watched and counted on his fingers, "um lope, Slam Hardy, I tink so some nis one for Injun, 'bout two days eat 'um all up some nis one for sluga."

"The sugar be hanged!" said Sam; "I'll git 'um all he wants." He looked with something akin to fondness on the child, and it regarded him constantly, while clutching the watch to its side and munching at the lumps, which were fast disappearing.

"Ye're a pretty little chap," said the lookout, addressing his "Injun," and holding fast to the rope, "an' a comfort fer teh see.

Need'en be scared, yeh pore little tike, ole Sam Hardy was a kid hisself onct." The child sat there stolidly, its brown, round, and bright little face a study in the expressions of fluctuating hope, timidity, and an inclination to cry. Such a wistful, dumb, appealing look old Sam had never seen in his life.

"I'll hev teh git teh work," he presently remarked, "fer the wood's a comin'." With that he tied the end of the rope to a staple that was driven in the wall of the cabin, grasped his pickaroon, and assumed his stand by the side of the flume. All the afternoon, till six o'clock, the wood, in sticks that were four feet long, and heavy, went scudding by in "drives." At times he jerked a dozen or twenty sticks from the water, to prevent the drive from jamming and wedging in the flume. These sticks, when the drive had passed, he would quickly return to the stream. Between the drives he would lean on the handle of his pickaroon to gaze in silence on the Indian child.

For his part the "make-believe" savage crawled as far as the rope would permit, got his chubby little figure in behind a brush, and peered forth shyly, in a manner that rendered the suspicions of Chuck very potent and assured.

With night, the water ceased to run in the flume, and Hardy brought his "Injun" into the cabin. The wild little thing, released from his hand, ran to the corner that was furthest from the light and attempted to hide beneath a hat. There he was left while Chuck and the lookout completed the cooking and eating of the evening meal, when the giant very tenderly lifted the tiny Washoe out, and gave him to eat, of such of the food as he liked.

"Chuck," said the lookout later, as he watched intently the heavy drooping of the weary eyes, "they uster be garmints whichever the kids were callin' 'nighties.' Don't s'pose yeh could make him none, hey?"

"No sabbee," said Chuck, as he quietly recovered his watch, which had slipped from the wee relaxing hand, "no sabbee."

"Don't, hey? Wal, lemme see. They uster be about like a three-x flour sack, unless I disrecollec', with holes fer the head'n arms." He whistled a tune of his own peculiar composition, got a sack from a nail, reversed it, cut a gash in the then top for the head, and one in either corner for the arms.

"Reckon thet's the ticket," said he. "Come yere, Injun." He tenderly undressed the roly-poly, little sleepy-head, put the sack fairly over him, and had the satisfaction of seeing the round black head emerge from its hole, and the fat brown arms come approximately right in theirs. The two little ears of the sack stood out below at the youngster's heels, like funny little horns, while the "three-x" lettering, although turned wrong side up, made a very peculiar effect in decoration.

After this old Sam tucked the child snugly in his bunk. "I don't jest hitch my mem'ry to them 'Now-I-lie-me' rhymes," said he, as the child recognized the blankets and clung to them eagerly, "but I says, 'Sleep tight, an' God bless yeh,' anyhow."

For long after Chuck had retired to his bunk in the shed addition, the lookout sat and stared at his candle. Now and then he would glance at the corner where the youngster was lying, an anxious look in his gentle, serious eyes. When he slept at last it was down on the floor. "Chil'ren," he sagely observed, "air never fit fer teh be disturbed."

"Slam Hardy," said Chuck, on the following morning, "I tink so no time you see some nis one for nother kind for baby."

"Thet's where ye're off, Chinaman," said Sam; "my little kid of a brother was no more bigger'n him when he died."

"Hop die?" said Chuck, "oh, too muchee bad," and he placed the watch very quietly in the hand of the round little Washoe.

All that day the "Injun," loosely fastened with his rope, remained as far in the brush as its length would allow, clinging in a strange, persistent way to the watch, which always continued most cordially to tick. The lookout fed him carefully, sighing that an appetite could be so wee, and he wrought at his work on the flume, hourly expecting the Indians to come his way in search of their missing child. Chuck, convinced by the gentleness and the evident conviction of "Slam Hardy," had overcome his prejudice, and gave his friendship when he gave the watch.

The sun went down on the gray of the sage-brush with never a sign from the tribe of Washoes above or below the cabin.

"No tellin'," said the lookout in the cabin that evening, "how long the Injuns'll be a gittin' here, an' the pore little skeezucks is a needin' of pants, or I'm a Hottentot." Accordingly he took the

second best pair of his own, cut them off, or pared them down at the legs, the top, and the sides, sewing where needed with common twine, and a needle made for sacking grain.

"They don't fit oncommon close," said he as he finally made an inspection, "but when 'saw to a distance,' as the artist sed about his pictur, they ain't more'n half ways bad." Their general fullness, indeed, would require some other description than "bad."

Again the day went by without a visitor, and the program of the days that were gone was repeated, save that Chuck was a little more friendly, and that the "Injun" seemed less than ever inclined to be fed. Not a sound did he make, morning, noon, or night, of word, laughter, or crying.

As the twilight came a caravan of Indians, far below on the dusty, winding road, went slowly along in a march away from the town. Throwing his pickaroon carelessly aside, the lookout ran as hard as he could, down through the sage-brush and over the rocks, till he reached the road ahead of the motley procession.

There were squaws and men, the young and the old; a lot on foot, and a few on sorry steeds; and many of the women were laden with baskets, bundles, or children. All shook their heads at queries of a lost or missing son. They plodded away to the misty South, and were lost in the gloom of descending night.

Sam Hardy returned less rapidly, but never with a gentler heart nor a readier solicitude. "Injun," said he, as he looked in the depths of those dumb and wistful eyes, "I'm sorry teh hev teh tell yeh thet I'm still all the mamma ye've got. I'm afeerd some little thet I ain't a makin' of yeh happy, but I'm a doin' of my level best."

"What's mallah him? Not muchee for eatee?" said Chuck, who made it a solemn duty to wind the watch, and return it to the keeping of the brown little fist. "I not muchee sabbee."

"Matter is he's pinin'," Sam gravely replied. "I'd turn 'um loose in the bresh, oney he'd starve fer shore, an' coyotes 'ud git 'um. Mebbe he ain't no Washer after all but has been stole from another tribe an' put in the flume fer devilment."

Chuck could only shake his head and endeavor to make his cooking more commendable.

The days now slipped too rapidly away, for never a change there came in the dread monotony. Time after time "Sam"

ran headlong to the road below, to speak to the Indians passing down or up, but always to return with a bended head and the same reply athrob in his heart. Not even a squaw was willing to accept the orphan as a foundling of the tribe. And day by day the roundness of the plump little countenance and body became less and less assured, while the light in his eyes grew deeper and dumber, and far more wistful.

"I'm shore yer mamma," said the lookout very often, as he tenderly undressed the silent little person, or carried him out in the sun, "an' I wisht I was better eddicated fer the job." And he frequently added, "Yeh couldn't call a feller mamma, now could yeh — hey? Wal, never mind, yeh pore little chap."

Then came a morning when the "Injun" made his first tiny sound — the sound of a weak little cough. He was thin, and a blaze of ethereal light was come in those dumb and wistful eyes. The feeble little hand that clung to the watch was wasted, and its brown, once so ruddy, was rich no more, nor deep.

And all that morning the lookout sat with hands a-clasp, his face all drawn in anxious sorrow, watching — while the flume took care of itself. And Chuck stood silently by, a-grieved to see the two he had learned most deeply to love.

At length a long, steadfast gaze of the soft brown eyes; the parched little lips were opened; the wan wee hand put forth to that of the lookout. On the lips where the strange stolidity had reigned so long a flitting smile came faintly.

"Mum-ma," said the child — its first, its last, its only utterance. Then the weary eyelids drooped, and the wistful look was gone.

The broken little heart and the faithful watch had ceased to tick.

A Problem of the East.

BY JOSEPH A. ALTSHELER.

JOHN SANFORD was in a state of felicity until the wind failed and his ship lay becalmed in the sea that rims the northern coast of Africa. The voyage out from Boston had been quick and full of good omens; the trading venture in Sicily had been attended by good luck and skillful conduct, and now he was on his way home with much gold and silver locked in the strong box in the cabin. But the brand new republic of which he was a brisk citizen had been somewhat lax lately in paying its allotted share of tribute money to his nearest neighbors, the pious Moslem corsairs. And his ship was too small and his crew too few to repel serious attack from a people who showed scant courtesy to the Declaration of Independence and the rights of man, except as supported by a fine show of muskets and wide-mouthed cannon.

So he cursed the wind, or rather the lack of it, that held his ship in the center of a grilling world, like an apple roasting before the fire and waiting to be eaten, and tried vainly to extract comfort from the second mate. That worthy, one Old Tom of Nantucket, leathery of skin, stolid of face, and great in experience, dashed buckets of sea water on the deck, and between dashings shut one eye and gazed industriously toward the continent of Africa. He knew the place he was in, and he knew that no good would come out of that shore.

Two days and two nights the ship swayed on the ocean. In the early morning watch of the second night Sanford saw something over toward Africa that twinkled like a star; but, Old Tom, after watching it intently for about five minutes, said it was a signal fire. Then he hunted up the first mate and told how, if anything should happen to him, the money that was to his credit in the bank at Nantucket was to be disposed of.

The coming of the day brought a whiff of wind, and the blue sea water began to crumble away on either side of the ship's prow. As the currents of air filled the sails, from the southeast two ships appeared, which Tom at once named as "Barbary pirates out following their trade." Larger of hull and with much more spread of sail than Sanford's vessel, they gained upon her so fast as to leave them no resort but to try the strong arm. The ship carried a six-pounder, and there was a musket for each man. The crew had not shipped to fight; but neither had they shipped to be martyrs, and they took the muskets in willing hands. Sanford himself aimed the six-pounder at the decks thick with brown-faced and forbidding men and succeeded in sending a ball into the thickest huddle. But a moment later both the corsairs bumped against Sanford's ship, their crews sprang upon his deck, then as the captain tried to raise his pistol, a thrill as of death shot through his head, and he fell like one smitten by a bolt from God.

When Sanford was able to hear and to feel and to see again, he found himself lying with a very sore head at the bottom of a long boat. Some brown men in Eastern habit were pulling at the oars and other such men reposed in idleness and silence on the seats. Old Tom of Nantucket and all the companions of his own race and whiteness of skin were gone.

It was not for nothing that Sanford had sailed the seas and learned the ways of nations. At once he understood that life had been left in his body that it might serve the uses of another. There were slaves in Sanford's own country, despite its Declaration of Independence and its agreeable assertions about the rights of men, but they were black and stupid, and it never occurred to him that they cared. But he was a white man, one of the ruling race, a son of the new republic of freedom that had arisen in the West like a star shooting up to the zenith. The thought gave a wrench to Sanford's heart and he groaned with such agony that his Moslem captors looked curiously at him. Then they laughed, and he who laughed loudest kicked him in the side. Sanford's hands were unbound and his first impulse was to give a blow for the kick. But he reconsidered and remembered that one could be a slave and yet not want to die. So he merely crouched closer against the side of the boat.

In an hour or two they landed on that Africa of which Old Tom of Nantucket had spoken to him words evil in import. When he took the first step upon the soil of the unhappy continent he felt as if the fetters of his slavery had been bound upon his ankles, for, from one of his captors, an English-speaking Mohammedan, he learned that the few of his crew who had survived were taken to be slaves, and that he was reserved as a present to the Bashaw.

And as he plodded at the heels of a camel, in the center of the caravan, his own country seemed distant, dim, unattainable. The dust of the desert made a crust in his throat and spread a film over his eyes. A mortal weariness struck him in the limbs. Once when he lagged the leader reached down from a camel's height and lashed him across the back with the thong of a whip. Sanford did not cry out, but he felt then the bitterness of the life that is worse than death.

In three days they reached the capital, where the ruins of old Rome, the broken bones of the past, which neither the drifting dust of the desert nor the tawdry town of the modern Moor could hide, gained solemnity and majesty from the meanness and bitterness of the things that surrounded them. But the mind of Sanford turned not to the past. His were the thoughts of a slave who wonders what kind of a master the future will give to him.

It had been a fruitful summer, and much Christian wealth and many Christian captives had been gathered in the capital by faithful captains when Sanford was presented to the Bashaw. The autocrat was in complacent mood, and he looked not unkindly upon his new slave. Sanford was tall, and straight, and sightly, and the Bashaw made him a servant in his palace instead of sending him to the galleys or to toil in the fields with the lash over him. There were many things that Sanford could do which would be of use to a potentate who knew not the civilization of the West, and in time Sanford, with a new-born wisdom — he had seen the bastinado in practise — was doing them. Sometimes the thought vaguely passed through his mind that principle is merely a matter of place and circumstance; but he did not stop to inspect the subject too closely.

The profits of such conduct accrued fast, and Sanford rose in

Mohammedan grace. He could do special duty; when he learned the native tongue he was of great value in translating the tales of captives newly taken. As he smoothed his temper and bent his back the load of slavery became lighter and some of it slipped off.

Sanford had reached a position which in the West would be called secretary to a great man, when he saw the Bashaw's fourth and favorite wife, Zuleika. It was some trifling knowledge of medicine that he had picked up on his voyages that caused him to be sent into the harem to cure Zuleika's headache. When he saw her he did not wonder at the Bashaw's fondness, for she was Circassian, as fair of skin as his own countrywomen, and pleasant to the eye that loves beauty.

Sanford's success in the practise of medicine raised him a degree further in the esteem of his master, who was not without gratitude or an eye for merit. The Caucasian became a privileged man in the palace, and the face of the Bashaw's favorite wife was not hidden from him, though the black eunuch, Mukhtar, who was chief guard of the harem, was always present when he saw her. It was on one of his healing visits that she told her history, which was short and without romance. She had been reared for the market with the care that would be bestowed upon any other animal that may have a future and considerable value. When she last saw her parents they were loudly and joyously counting the silver that was her price, and she left them feeling neither joy nor sorrow. Displayed for sale again in the slave market at Stamboul, she had been bought by an agent of the Bashaw and brought to his capital. The story of her life since then ended in the harem walls.

Apparently the Bashaw was but one of the incidents of a colorless life. Her face, though it had traces of the Greek profile, expressed neither joy nor sorrow, only the immemorial apathy of the East. How different, reflected Sanford, were the women in his own young country,—the country which was growing dimmer to him every day. Were men and women merely the creatures of place and circumstance? The thought was not so vague now.

At one of these interviews it occurred to Sanford to tell Zuleika of his own country and the women of his race, for some

shreds of the pride of the West still endured in him. And as the mind and imagination of Sanford had become supple and agile in the service of the Bashaw, he painted the picture of the West in intense colors. He told of a land in which there was to be neither master nor slave, and the one man was to be as good as the other. In all this the woman was to have a just part. She was not bought or sold, and she shared almost equally with man the glory and fulness of the world.

Zuleika listened at first without comprehension. The thing was too strange to be believed.

"And thou sayest the woman is the equal of the man in thy country?" she said. "Nay, it cannot be. It is contrary to the will of Allah. One man is slave and another man is master, but the woman was made to be the servant of the man."

But a tale that is often told gains strength with the telling and finds belief at last. Sanford watched with interest the first signs of intelligence in Zuleika's mind. It was the benevolent curiosity with which the gardner looks at the tender shrub that has grown from the new and strange seed that he has buried in the mold as an experiment.

"I should like to see this country of thine of which thou tellest such marvelous tales," said Zuleika one day when black Mukhtar stood frowning at the length of her interview with Sanford. "Then I should know whether the things thou tellest are true or are but words of thine own making, like the tales of the Arab jugglers who come to the palace. Shall I ever go there?"

And when Sanford told her he did not think it had been decreed by Allah,—

"Then why dost thou talk to me so much of thy country?" asked Zuleika. "I can never know whether thy words are the words of truth, or are said but to deceive or to amuse me."

But Sanford was now too supple to be daunted by mild reproofs. He called heaven to witness that he told the thing that was and not the thing that was not. And the woman, though she doubted, was willing to hear more.

It was about this time that Sanford did a great service for the Bashaw. The Bashaw was a just man according to his race and creed. As became a devout follower of the Prophet he was zeal-

ous in fitting out ships to prey upon the commerce of the infidel. He remitted his set share of tribute to Constantinople with promptness and fulness of measure. He never used the lash and the bastinado on his white slaves more than was necessary. He said his prayers four times a day, and drank no wine in the sight of other good Moslems. There was no reason why the Bashaw, when he left this world, should not dwell in the seventh heaven with Mahomet, and bask in the smiles of the houris that make the delight of paradise.

But all these meritorious qualities did not prevent a palace plot from being formed against the Bashaw. One evening about dusk, when Sanford lingered near a rose tree that grew beside the fountain in the palace yard, he heard the conspirators planning their blow. The Albanian, Stavoros, whose valor had won him the command of the Bashaw's body guard, was the leader. Hassan, the Bashaw's nephew, who, the plot succeeding, was to mount the throne in his uncle's place, seemed no less eager. Most of the eunuchs and the officers of the body guard had been corrupted, and the next evening, when the Bashaw walked in the garden under the palm trees, he was to be sent into the presence of the Prophet by the saber of Stavoros.

When the conspirators left the garden, Sanford, brushing from his face the sweat of apprehension, entered the palace. He deliberated some time. To be concerned in Mohammedan intrigue was a matter of unrest and danger. But then it was apparent that he could gain nothing by an exchange of masters. On the contrary, he might lose. This reflection was decisive. He prayed an audience with his master and then told him all that he had heard by the fountain.

The Bashaw acted with more than Eastern promptness. The conspirators were seized as they slept. "I have lost a nephew," said the Bashaw to Sanford the next day at the decapitation of the plotters, when the head of Hassan fell on the marble floor, "but thou shalt take his place."

Being now a man of high trust, Sanford was able to meet Zuleika oftener, which was much to his satisfaction, as he wished to see his experiment put to a thorough test. Mukhtar still watched him suspiciously; but if it came to a contest between

them, it was probable that the eunuch and not Sanford would lose his head. Such knowledge as this made Sanford bold and Mukhtar cautious.

About this time Zuleika, who before had merely listened in an apathetic silence while Sanford talked, began to ask questions. These questions were about woman, the woman of the West, her liberty, her power, and her place in the world. These were the questions that Sanford wished her to ask, and he answered them all with the dexterity and pliancy of an Eastern courtier.

Sanford thought, too, that he noticed a gradual change in her appearance. There was some light in her eyes at last. They expressed emotions. She seemed to have curiosity about life and the world. This was, naturally, gratifying to a man of enterprising temper. There are few who do not like to see the success of their efforts.

There were further evidences of progress. One day, when the watchful Mukhtar was away, she handed to him a pink rose.

"I am learning the customs of thy world," she said. "There, so thou sayest, if a woman like any one she may show it. She is not a slave, thou sayest. I know not that what thou tellest me is true, but thy tales have pleased me, and I would hear more."

Sanford was too wise to show what the favorite wife of the Bashaw had given to him. For such, he knew, if caught, the kingdom of heaven was at hand. He became more cautious, but he did not refrain from seeing Zuleika. These interviews were pleasant, and he was loth to give them up. He could see that they were pleasing to Zuleika also, for there was a glint in her eyes when he came.

The sloth of the life in the palace was disturbed by the fate of the Bashaw's third wife. The lady's charms were fading, and the Bashaw had long been neglecting her for his favorite, Zuleika. Left much alone, she had looked with favor upon an officer of the body guard. The wise and faithful Mukhtar had observed all, and by and by he reported to his master. After that the lady and the officer were seen no more by man. It was whispered in the harem and among the slaves of the palace that they had been sewed up in sacks and dropped into the sea. Such was the practise on the Bosphorus, and it became the Sultan's vicegerents to

do likewise. Mukhtar, who received his due meed of praise from his master, said nothing. But there seemed to be more significance in his glance when he looked at Sanford.

Upon Zuleika this tragedy had a surprising effect. Sanford did not see her until two weeks after its occurrence, when it had become to the others in the palace as one of the things of the ancient time, but she had not forgotten it.

"Would this have been the fate of a woman in thy country?" she asked. "Ah, it is as I told thee. In our land the woman is but the slave of the man. She pleases him to-day, and to-morrow she is cast away like a ragged garment. Perhaps I will be cast away also when I lose the beauty that my master values."

Sanford knew that she saw the truth. Doubtless she had seen it already, for this fact is obvious to the woman of Islam, but she had never comprehended it before, as keen and cruel in its nakedness as a bare sword. He told her again that in his country the husband could have but the one wife, and the wife was the equal in the law with her husband. He said, moreover, that the man who had grown up in the Western belief and had been molded by it, never could become aught else. He cited himself. He said that though now of the East, it would be possible for but one woman to hold his heart. She should be his sole sultana, the one star in the heavens that shone for him. He rather prided himself upon this Eastern metaphor, and thought that it would impress Zuleika.

"If all the men of thy country are as thou sayest thou art," said Zuleka, "then indeed the Western women are fortunate."

The Bashaw was sunk in luxury and sloth. His triumph over the conspirators made his power secure for a time at least. The terror of it and the recollection of those headless bodies would not pass away for another half year. So he took his ease with Oriental dignity, and the new Western ideas that were turning about in the unaccustomed brain of his fourth wife came not within his notice.

Sanford was growing fairly content with his slavery. His backbone acquired a flexibility which he would have deemed impossible when he was a free American captain on his own ship. The Declaration of Independence, the rights of man, and all the other

noble ideas and aspirations that had filled the minds of the men he knew at home were gone like a feeble glimmer of summer lightning. He accepted his present life as the order of things destined for him.

There was another American slave in the city. Sanford had heard of him for his name had been spoken in the palace, but he had never seen him. This man had not the adjustable or judicious temperament of Sanford. He had not bent himself into the Eastern ways and he had paid the price in toil and pain. He was not a stranger to either the lash or the bastinado. Once or twice Sanford had thought of trying to see him, but then he concluded it could not do any good to either. The man was perverse and foolish and it was his own fault that he made for himself such a rough bed to lie in.

But one day Sanford heard interesting news about the other captive. It seemed that he had friends at home who had gathered together all the money they had to spare, and after long searching, through the friendly agency of one of the European consuls, had succeeded in finding him and buying him out of slavery.

The man was to be sent in a Spanish vessel to Barcelona. Thence he would sail for America and home. The day before his departure he was brought to the palace and Sanford saw him. His name was Phineas Peden, and his native place was Salem, Massachusetts. He was a tall, thin man of fifty, with sharp, uncompromising features. Without much education, and born and bred in poverty, he was full of religious fervor and despised the heathen and the infidel and everything that appertained to them. Out of the influences of the East the stern, unyielding spirit of the West had come as cold and keen as a bayonet point.

Peden welcomed Sanford with joy and pity. It had been long since Peden had looked upon the face of his own kind and he hung over his countryman like a father over a recovered son.

"And how long hast thou been a captive in the hands of the infidel?" he asked, speaking in the style of one who had often preached at the revival meetings in his own country and who was noted for his fervor.

Sanford told him.

"Evidently thou hast fared somewhat better in body than I

have," said Peden, "but to the soul it is the same. In all their doings and all their ways these people savor of evil and are evil. Islam is wicked in the sight of the Almighty and is festering in its decay and corruption. Have no part in this life, my son, for it can only defile and ruin thee."

After some further talk about this debasing Oriental life, Peden passed to the joyful anticipations with which his heart was filled.

"I thank the Almighty every day that He will permit me to see that land again," said Peden, "and I would die content and thanking Him if He had no other blessing in store for me. Thou, too, my son, must look forward night and day to a like deliverance, for how otherwise couldst thou endure this captivity in the hands of the Philistines?"

With such exhortations and encouragement he filled the ears and mind of Sanford. The last words of the zealot to him as he left the place were:

"I go before thee, my son, but I will await thee there."

He pointed exultingly to the West.

Though he was gone his figure remained in the imagination of Sanford as vivid as reality. He was strangely and deeply stirred. The Puritan's words had cut to the marrow. All his old life, his happy childhood, the freedom and ease of his young manhood, the noble impulses that he had seen in the people around him, returned to him. How pure that old life seemed to him now that he was in the midst of the garish colors of the East and breathed its poison-tainted atmosphere! He felt superior to place and circumstance. Fate had tricked him strangely, but he would stand firm again and prove himself worthy of his birthright and better than those whom chance had made his masters.

The old man had touched some spring in his nature which set the rusty machinery to work, and now that it was started he could not stop it. Stirred anew by the breezes from the West much of the Eastern suppleness that he had acquired with such facile skill slipped away from him. Twice he offended his master, and when at the second offense the Bashaw cursed him for an infidel dog, black Mukhtar who heard it bent his head and muttered that to all who wait Allah brings opportunity.

The rebuke of the Bashaw showed Sanford by how uncertain a

tenure favor was held in the East. He was forced at last to think of the future and what the end would be.

John Sanford had acquired wisdom and, since life had changed its tints for him again, he determined to alter his position to fit the new color of that life, or rather the old color come back again. He would escape. He, too, would see again the land of his birth, and would become once more a free man, with his face to the stars.

But escape was not such an easy matter even for a preferred slave. He might walk almost as he pleased in the palace yard and the palace garden, but beyond these limits he had not passed in months, save in the train of his master. Moreover, he knew that the watchful eye of Mukhtar was always on him. He planned with restless mind for days but could see no way. At last he decided to tell Zuleika. Her influence might help him, and confident in his knowledge of women he believed that, at least, she would not betray him.

Zuleika heard him through with patience.

"Thou wouldst return to that country of which thou tellest me so much?" she said. "I do not wonder at thy wish if it is all as thou sayest. If thou goest, who then will be left to tell me of these wonders?"

That was a phase of the matter which had not occurred to Sanford. Some other Christian slave, he suggested, might take his place.

"Others may come," she said, "but there will be none whose stories will please me like thine. But I will help thee to return to thine own land and thine own people. I give my promise."

This pledge brought much joy to Sanford, for the Eastern woman is full of cunning and he believed that Zuleika would use it for him. Two days later when he saw her again she told him that everything was prepared for his flight.

"There is a guard," she said, "an Arab who watches at the gate in the southeast corner of the garden wall. Him I have befriended, and on the second night after to-day at an hour before midnight he will leave his post and flee to the desert which he longs for as thou longest for thy home. Then the gate will be unguarded and thou mayest pass out. Go through the city to the

westward and stop by the ruined mosque that overlooks the sea. There thou wilt find a boat with a sail and provisions. Set the sail for the Christian coasts and trust the rest to Allah."

On the second night, a half hour before the appointed time, Sanford was in the garden armed with a dagger in case of sudden attack. He had prayed, not to Allah, but to his own Christian God for a dark night; and the clouds that hid the stars showed that his wish would be granted. He started across the garden, keeping in the shadow of the palm trees. The water splashed in the fountain and a song bird raised a lone note. It was the same fountain beside which he had heard the conspirators talking, and when some stray rays of light seeping through the palm trees disclosed a dark figure standing near it, Sanford was chilled to bone and heart, for he thought it was the ghostly figure of one of the dead conspirators.

Nor did the warmth return to his heart when he looked more closely and saw that it was the black eunuch, Mukhtar. Mukhtar seemed to be listening, and he held his drawn sword in his hand. It was the weapon that Stavoros had loved, presented after his execution by the Bashaw to his faithful Mukhtar.

Sanford doubted not that Mukhtar was watching for him. Nor did he doubt what the result would be should Mukhtar find him. A strange weakness in the backbone, which he had not known before he was captured on the ship, seized him. His mind sought to master his nerves. He told himself what he was, where he was born, and of his birthright of freedom, but the flesh was too weak. He could not look upon Mukhtar's sword and say that he knew not fear. He cowered under the palm trees and trembled as a child that is frightened of the night. He put his hands upon his face to shut out the sight of the naked sword, and when he took them away again they were wet. The song bird had hushed his note, and there was no sound but the murmur of the fountain and the soft rustling of a western breeze among the palm trees.

Mukhtar stood with raised face and listening ears at the fountain. The sword was held outstretched with rigid wrist, as if ready for a blow. Presently the black plunged it to the hilt in the water. Then he drew it slowly out and held it up in the faint light, while the bubbles flowed down from hilt to point and

dropped on the ground. Then he wiped the blade on his tunic and walked away from the fountain.

Sanford thought Mukhtar was coming towards him, and he sank almost prone upon the ground. He shook with a chill, as if the blood in his veins had frozen, and burrowed in the grass like a crawling beast. He was not then of the West that he boasted, straight, free, and with upraised face.

Mukhtar stopped again near the palm trees and listened. He did not see the abject figure that lay in the dusk, and was striving to thrust itself into the earth. Soon he replaced the sword in his girdle and, walking with heavy step, went into the palace.

It was the sound of the eunuch's departing footsteps that roused Sanford from his stupor. The garden was empty, save for himself. He rose, wiped the bitter mucus from his lips and ran toward the Southeastern gate. He put his hand upon the gate, and it swung wide. Zuleika had been true to her promise, and the guard was gone. Sanford gasped with joy, but a hand was placed lightly upon his arm, and he shriveled up again, falling weakly against the wall.

"Fear not," said a gentle voice. "Thou art not betrayed. It is I, Zuleika."

"Zuleika!" exclaimed Sanford, "why have you come here? You risk both our lives."

She retained her hand upon his arm and lifting her veil looked him in the eyes with eyes that were luminous.

"What do I fear?" she said. "I am going with thee. In the country of which thou hast told me so much there is the one husband and the one wife, and thy law seems to me to be right. Once a bird came to a maiden in a garden and sang to her sweet songs every day. And when she grew to love the bird it turned into a beautiful youth. Even so with me. I have listened to all thy tales. I love them and him who has told them. Come, we will fly together to thine own land."

This was beyond the reckoning of Sanford. In a breath he realized how unfit she was for the life she proposed to find.

"It is impossible for us to go together, Zuleika," he said. "Everything to which I return will be strange to you."

"It is nothing," she said. "Thou hast my love, and I will follow thee across the seas."

Pity dwelt for a moment in Sanford's breast. But it was no time for delay. The gate was open, and if he would find freedom he must seek it.

"Come," he said to Zuleika, "We will try the future together."

They passed through the gate and met Mukhtar on the other side. The strength of a man deserted Sanford. He could bear neither the sight of the naked sword nor the malice triumphant in Mukhtar's eyes. But not so Zuleika. Her hand went to her bosom, and whipping out a dagger, she leaped with the agility of a cat within Mukhtar's guard before he could raise his sword. She thrust the dagger three times in his breast, and the eunuch fell still holding the great sword in his stiff fingers.

Sanford shrank back. A horror and a dread of this fierce and reckless woman possessed him. He shuddered at the ghastly heap in the dusk, that was once Mukhtar.

"You have killed him!" he said between his dry lips. "This is murder, and you, you, a woman!"

"A woman! Yes," she said, still holding the bloody dagger in her hand, and confronting him with exulting face. "A woman who dares to strike for the man she loves. I said I loved thee, and I have proved it. I am no longer a toy of the harem, but a woman, bold like a man, such as those of thine own country. I have a right to boast of what I have done. Come, it is time to flee."

She spoke in fearless tones, and seizing his hand drew him away. Sanford followed as obediently as a little child, not daring to look back at the man she had struck down.

Only when they had gained the shadow of the ruined mosque that overlooks the sea, and found the boat tied to a rock on the shore, did he feel himself a man once more. At that sight all the old and familiar instincts of the sailor returned to him. The sea, so long his home, beckoned again to him with friendly greeting.

The doing of a once familiar task restored confidence to Sanford. He trimmed the sail with a practised hand, and the boat bore away to the Northwest.

When the sun rose out of the ocean, and the gray veil of the heavens turned to blue, Zuleika, for the first time in her life, was beyond the sight of land, and the knowledge of it made her shiver, like one whose hold on the edge of a precipice is slipping.

"It seems wider than the desert," she said to Sanford.

"So it is," said Sanford cheerfully; "but don't be afraid, like the desert it ends somewhere. Europe is not so very far away. This stiff breeze ought to carry us there in good time."

Africa and slavery having gone down behind the convex curve of the sea, Sanford became sanguine of mood and voluble of speech. He talked rapidly of America and the things that he would do there. He wondered what the people who used to know him would say when they saw him coming back like one newly risen and with the mold of the grave upon him. He jested and laughed at their surprise, and finally sang an old lilting song of the fishermen who go up to the Grand Banks. Then he began to tell of the West again, and the picture had the deepest rose tints that could be drawn from his imagination.

Zuleika was silent. She sat as if trying to span the mystery of the great new world toward which she was going. The blood of Mukhtar was not on her soul. She had forgotten him, as she would the insect crushed beneath her feet.

Toward noon they saw a sail and Sanford was divided betwixt a great hope and a great fear. It might be European or it might be Mohammedan. In time it passed on without seeing them and slipped under the rim of the horizon, and Sanford did not know whether to mourn or to rejoice. At night a calm came and their boat lopped gently in the swell of the sea. Neither slept. They were surrounded by the splendors of a southern night, and Sanford pointed out the stars of the sailors and told the names by which they were called in his hard Western tongue.

The calm continued the next day, and when the sun had reached the zenith a dry, burning heat enveloped them, the sail blistered at the touch. For the first time Sanford looked anxiously at the water jar. Enough for four days. But a wind or a friendly ship might come before then. In the afternoon there was a wind that brought hope, but it did not last long and left them anchored on the breathless ocean.

Two more days passed with slight whiffs of wind, and no sail either of friend or enemy. The bottom of the water jar was dry now, and their tongues cracked. That night they prayed, Sanford to the Christian God, Zuleika to the Moslem Allah.

The next day they began to sink into a stupor. The light of the sun was so intense that red atoms seemed to float in the air.

"Which way is thy country?" asked Zuleika.

Sanford pointed to the West. "But it is far off now," he said.

"We have trusted in Allah," said Zuleika. "We are in his hands."

"So be it," said Sanford, unconsciously adopting the manner of the old Puritan.

. . . . . .

The Captain of the schooner, *Red Wing*, returning from Palermo to New York, saw afar a black splotch on the sea, which he knew to be a boat. The course of the ship was turned toward it. A boat was lowered under the charge of the first mate, and the crew pulled with strong stroke to the derelict. The Captain saw them take out two figures and then return to his ship. To his hail the mate replied:

"There are two, a woman and a man. The breath has gone from one of them. The other will come through, I think."

The figures were lifted on board, and the ship, bearing the two, sailed on into the red blaze of the setting sun, the better one living and the other dead.

An Aproned Angel.

BY ANNIE PRESCOTT BULL.

"M sure sister would like it," faltered Miss Dorcas Upton to herself, as she stood in the entry in the twilight, one hand on the knob of the parlor door, while the other grasped a tiny bundle of yellowed muslin. She waited a moment as if to steady herself; then she opened the door softly and advanced to where her sister lay sleeping that sleep which comes to all at the close of life's day, be it long or short. Miss Rachel's day had been a long one, tranquil for the most, and her last sinking into that dreamless rest had been like the gentle diminuendo of some lullaby or nocturne that dies away so softly that the last note scarce makes a vibration, and merges into our own sigh of regret that it is finished.

With a feeling of relief that at last she was freed, till the morrow, from the curious eyes of well-meaning helpers, Miss Dorcas moved to the window and opened the blind so that the sunset light fell benignantly on the serene face in which the lines were already relaxing. The face it was of her who had been Dorcas's constant companion since the time, so long ago, when her father told her gravely that the Lord, in His gracious goodness, had bestowed upon her a little sister. From the moment when she had been allowed to hold that sister in her arms she had loved her with the quiet intensity which the daughters of New England could feel but seldom express. She had helped her and protected her, and made the path of life easy for the demure and trusting little companion. Indeed, the only deceit of her lifetime had been the sly knitting of occasional rows upon Rachel's "stent," and, strange to say, her conscience, though a direct Puritan legacy, never gave her a pang upon that point.

Together they had gone hand in hand to school, clad in their immaculate little gingham aprons which their mother never suf-

fered them to omit. These were replaced by white ones on the occasions of "speaking pieces," and it was only on the Sabbath that the dresses so carefully protected were ever revealed. The tidy habit thus early impressed upon the "Upton girls" persisted through life, with this variation, — in mature age the gingham apron of the morning gave place to black silk in the afternoon, and, with growing susceptibility to varying degrees of warmth, they deemed it prudent to put their aprons *under* their dress skirts when they went out of doors. This indispensable addition to their toilet gained new character and distinction as worn by these well-born dames, and it seemed most fitting that in its daintiest form it should figure in their one romance. For so closely were their lives interwoven that in time they came to regard the experience as common to both.

To be sure, Miss Dorcas had not lacked admirers, but her sister absorbed all the affection she had to give; and the only secret she had ever kept from Rachel was the fact that one never-to-be-forgotten Sunday, when the other had been detained at home from church by a headache, Deacon Pierce, evidently "perked up" for the occasion, had approached Dorcas after service with the remark that he "didn't know but he might as well drive round by her house, and mebbe she'd get in and ride." Dorcas had refused with decision, though with an inward feeling of pride, for Deacon Eben was a respected member of society; and in that undemonstrative community, no man of mature years, least of all a widower, ever gave any such invitation unless he intended to follow it with one relative to a more protracted journey. This, however, had seemed a small affair beside the story of those summer days when short-lived joy gave way to resignation in her sister's heart.

She could see Rachel as she looked the afternoon that Reuben Foster went away. It was Rachel's birthday, and she had put on her best muslin, a white one with a blue sprig; she had added the inevitable apron, but this time a marvel of its kind, Dorcas's birthday gift, with one little pocket ornamented by a blue bow. When one said blue in those days it conveyed no uncertain idea of a wide range of shades, from "robin's egg" to "military," from "baby" to "navy." Blue was *blue*, and blue was true and scarce deeper than Rachel's eyes. Her pink cheeks, a shade rosier that

day, and her soft, brown hair helped to make a picture which caused Reuben Foster's heart to give a throb, and then to swell until he was almost choked. And though she had consented to walk "crosslots" with him to the turnpike where he could catch the Boston stage as it rounded the turn, Reuben could find no words to express what he wished to say, as they strolled silently down the path between the hollyhocks and through the orchard.

It was not until the stone wall was reached, and the stage was heard rumbling along the road that he turned to Rachel and said, "Give me somethin', Rachel, to remember you by," though to have forgotten her would have been impossible to Reuben's true heart. Frightened at her own audacity, yet brave with the strength of a love that had no reason to be ashamed, she said quickly, "Here, Reuben, I've nothing but this," trying to take the blue bow from her apron pocket. Dorcas's careful stitches would not yield to Rachel's slim fingers, and Reuben's knife was called to their aid. In his trembling hand it released the bow, but made a tiny cut in the muslin, a spot upon which many tears were destined to fall in years to come. The stage was by this time well in sight, and in desperation Reuben clasped Rachel for once in his arms, and their lips met. As he turned away she caught his coat, and with a fearless look into his eyes said, "Good-by, Reuben, and God bless you." The stage driver gave an impatient shout, and with a parting clasp of her hand, Reuben sprang over the wall, and was soon carried out of Rachel's sight.

It was never known exactly how it happened, but the stage horses were new to the road, and the driver had fortified himself with an unusual supply of New England rum. At the worst place going down Temple Mountain the stage was overturned. Reuben, in his efforts to save the woman who was his sole traveling companion, received a mortal hurt, and died before help arrived.

At Reuben's funeral, as a tacit acknowledgment of their close relations, Rachel was given a place of prominence among the mourners, a tribute which acted as a gentle balm upon her wounded heart on that occasion. But as time went on her allegiance to Reuben's memory never wavered, and the face of her lover was ever before her, young and brave as upon the day that he bade her good-by; the face of the fading daguerreotype that looked

down from its place of honor on the mantelpiece, where it stood framed in varnished cones and acorns, the loving work of Rachel's hand. This and the little apron, folded out of sight with the precious rent that Reuben's knife had made, were her only keepsakes. She often longed to ask if the blue bow had been found in Reuben's keeping, but that seemed too forward on her part, and she never knew that his mother discovered it carefully tucked away in his wallet, and, divining the giver, had placed it with her most precious mementoes of her boy.

Rachel Upton made no outcry and shirked no duty as the days went by; only Dorcas saw her tears and gave her comfort; and only Dorcas knew the hiding place of the little apron.

And as time soothed the smart of sorrow, Rachel's love had become to both a sweet memory, shedding its influence like perfume through their declining years, — the years whose gentle slope they had trodden, thinking that the end was but just in sight, and praying that they might reach it side by side.

But Rachel's lesser strength had failed first. And to-day as she lay there dressed for the last time, the thought had come to Dorcas that on her last journey Rachel must wear once more the little apron; that it must never be profaned by careless hands. It was a sacred trust she owed to her sister, — yes, and to Reuben. It was a new birthday for Rachel, and he would miss the pretty gift that he had praised.

Now at last, with the departure of those who would neither have known nor understood, her opportunity had come. So, with lips set, but tenderly smiling eyes, Miss Dorcas stroked out the time-yellowed folds of her bundle — a quaint little apron, bordered with a lace-edged ruffle, and sweet with the memory-haunted fragrance of pressed rose leaves. With all reverence she bent and gently fastened the precious relic under the enveloping shroud. And now as she seated herself in silence for her last watch she was no longer alone. Once more she saw them as on that summer afternoon when they had walked together through the orchard; for Rachel, true through all the years, had gone to meet her lover, — Rachel, an aproned angel, prepared for loving service and companionship that knows no end.